

Grimshaw District

Peace Municipality and the
Battle River Prairie



Harvest Scene on Farm Adjoining Bear Lake

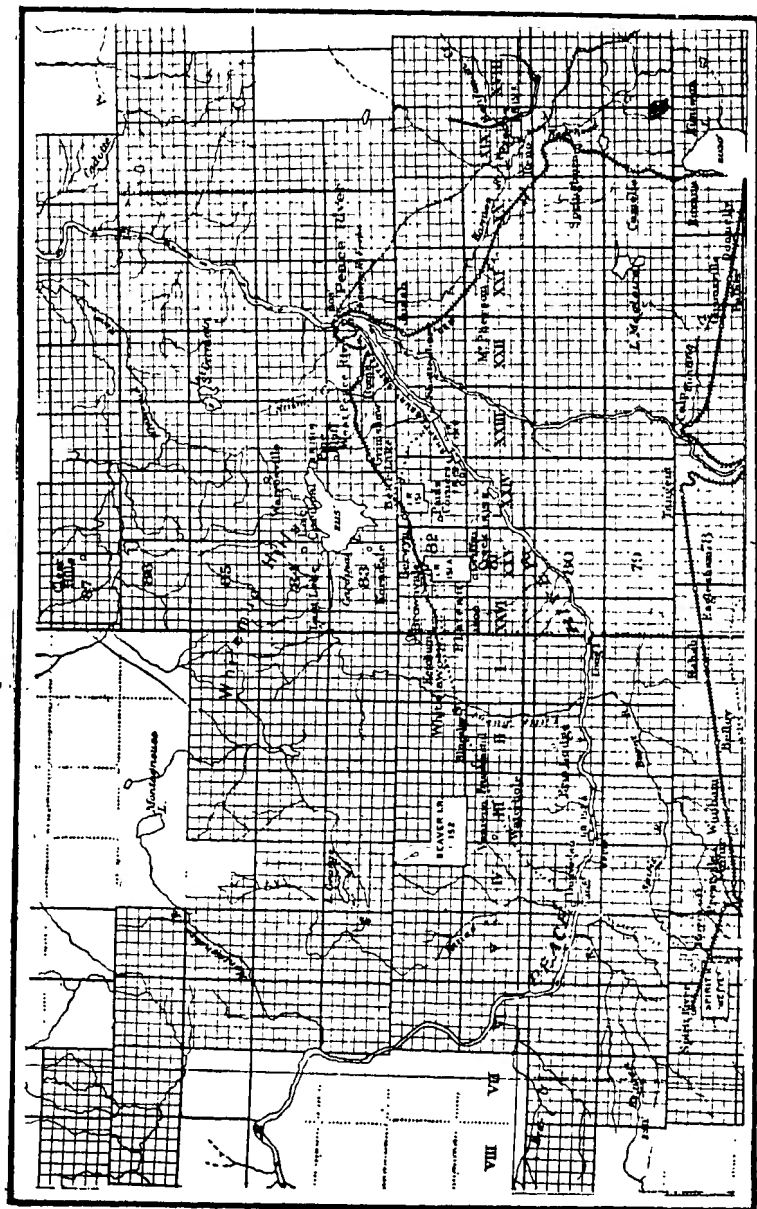
SOME FACTS

*Concerning Settlement and Farming Conditions
in one of the Choicest Sections of the*

Peace River Country

Compiled and Published in the interest of
PEACE RIVER AND WESTERN DEVELOPMENT

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PEACE RIVER, DUNVEGAN - WATERHOLE AND (PART OF) SPIRIT RIVER DISTRICTS



A herd of mixed purebreds and grades; loading steamers on the Peace; Centre view, the Alexander Falls on Hay River, 175 miles northwest from Peace River town.

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Development of the Peace River Country

The story of the development of the Peace River country within the space of a few years is such that the name of "Peace River" has become known almost the world over. For more than a hundred years after white men first came, the country was known only to the fur trade. Then the adaptability of the country for grain growing began to be known to the world through the winning of international wheat championships, the first of which was won by Peace River wheat in 1876, with grain grown by a missionary farm in the extreme northern part of the Peace River country. Again in 1893 the world's wheat championship was won by Rev. Gough Brick, an Anglican missionary, with wheat grown on a mission farm near what is the present townsite of Brownvale, in Peace Municipal district. Later in 1926, and again in 1927, the world's championship for both wheat and oats was won by Herman Trelle, of Wembley, in the Peace River country.

Up to 1909 practically the only farming done was on the farms of missionaries or surrounding the trading posts of the Hudson's Bay Company and similar trading companies. In 1909 settlement of the country began in a small way, and the success of the new settlers was such, that they were soon followed by others, despite the long distance from railways. With the completion of the railway in 1916, the actual development of the Peace River country received a great impetus, which is best shown in the grain statistics, published by the Dominion Bureau of Statistics, showing the total production over a period of years, as follows:

Year	Wheat	Oats	Barley	Rye	Total
1909	11,425	4,157	5,546		21,128
1916	117,692	756,421	68,123		942,236
1920	453,490	2,307,550	216,056	13,844	3,191,840
1922	1,871,000	2,374,000	487,000	40,000	4,772,000
1923	3,421,700	4,375,000	399,900	79,000	8,175,000
1926	5,289,000	4,934,000	480,000	72,000	10,775,000
1927	6,946,000	6,841,000	494,000	109,000	14,390,000

While the development has taken place throughout the whole Peace River country, growing in 18 years from a cultivated area of 1,126 acres to approximately 400,000 acres, it must be remembered that the entire Peace River country comprises some 60,000 square miles, or roughly 40,000,000 acres of agricultural land.

Municipal District of Peace, No. 857

It is the purpose of this little pamphlet to direct attention particularly to that section of country north of the Peace River and west of the town of the same name. Here we find both examples of some of the earliest settlement, and, close by, a large area of the finest agricultural lands still awaiting settlement and development.

The Municipal district of Peace No. 857 comprises all of Townships 80, 81, 82 and 83 in Ranges 21, 22, 23, 24, 25 and 26 north of the Peace River and west of the fifth meridian. Practically all the settlers in this municipality have received title for their land from the dominion government. Farm lands may be purchased within this area at a prices ranging from \$15 to \$40 per acre, the price being regulated by the stage of development and improvements. Taxes are light as in all parts of this country, and average from \$25 to \$40 per 160 acres. This figure includes municipal, provincial government and school taxes, and is levied on the value of the land without improvements. There are no taxes on personal property, automobiles and equipment.

Development of Highways and Schools

In the ten years since its organization, the municipality has expended upwards of \$100,000 on roads and bridges. In addition, the provincial highway department has built and maintained that portion of the Sunshine Trail highway which extends through the Municipality, and which connects with other portions of this road which give a splendid highway the entire length of the province and extending through the Peace River country to Rolla and Fort St. John in British Columbia, almost at the base of the Rocky Mountains. One portion of this highway, between Peace River and Edmonton, is still unfinished, but the government has large crews now at work, and it is confidently expected that the intending settler and tourist will be able to drive his car through from the United States direct to the Peace River country by August of 1928. A few venturesome tourists have already driven through, but the condition of the road is such that intending newcomers are advised against attempting the trip by car until announcement by the government that the road is completed.

The district is well served with public schools, there being thirteen school districts within its boundaries each under the direction of its own board of trustees elected by the land owners.

NO GOPHERS OR PRAIRIE DOGS.

Unlike the majority of the Canadian and United States prairie west, the Peace River country has no gophers, ground squirrels, prairie dogs, kit foxes, or similar pests. Snakes are practically unknown, with the exception of the little grass snakes, which are sometimes, but seldom, found in the hilly land close to the river.

One of the most important features of the entire Peace River country, from the farmer's standpoint, is the almost entire absence of noxious weeds. Such weeds as Russian Thistle, perennial sow thistle, etc., are not to be found. The provincial government maintains a staff of weed inspectors, whose duty it is to visit all farms and all parts of the district throughout the growing season in search of all kinds of noxious weeds. Heavy penalties are provided for land owners who neglect to completely destroy any weeds that may be found on their land. In this way an effort is being made to keep the district entirely free from the weed menace—an effort that so far has met with remarkable success, and promises to maintain the country in a remarkably clean condition.



Wheat Field of Peter Schneider's Farm Near Grimshaw

WATER SUPPLY IS ADEQUATE.

Little difficulty is experienced in obtaining an adequate supply of good water in any part of the district. There is no alkali, and water of good quality is generally obtained in wells from 18 to 50 feet in depth. In many parts of the district small streams and springs provide unlimited supplies of pure cold water for either stock or farm use. The famous Griffin Creek district was formerly known as "Cold Springs" owing to the abundance of such springs and streams.

GOOD SHIPPING FACILITIES.

Facilities for marketing and shipping of farm products, and particularly grain, are splendid. Freight rates on grain from the Peace River country are considerably lower than rates on roads further south. A typical comparison is found with Great Falls, Montana, where farmers pay a rate of 42c per 100 lbs on wheat to the Chicago market, while the Peace River farmer pays a rate of 34c per 100 lbs. on wheat to Winnipeg and Fort William, the big Canadian wheat market, or 26c to Vancouver, the new Pacific coast market.

The country is served by the Central Canada branch of the E. D. & B. C. railway, with two passenger trains and three freight train each way per week. Elevator facilities and sidings are provided at approximately every eight miles along the route of this railway through the district, and several thriving villages are springing up.



A Typical Farm Home in the Peace River Country

The provincial government telephone system extends through the district, connecting all part of the north country. Many farmers in the district have already received the advantages of the rural telephone system, and the provincial authorities are pushing further construction, adding further groups to the rural system, which is gradually spreading to cover the whole district. The telephone, together with the good roads already built, has done much to relieve the isolation which was the chief drawback to settlement in the earlier days, but which has now given place to abundant opportunity for social activity and business pursuits.

Grimshaw, Gateway to the West and North

Grimshaw, one of the live towns of the Peace River country, is strategically situated at the gateway to the northern and western portions of the country. From this point the highway branches northward to the Clear Hills and Battle River Prairie district. Grimshaw has also been chosen as the junction point for the proposed railway, to the Fort Vermilion and Mackenzie River district.

Grimshaw's well laid out streets connect with graded roads to all parts of the rich farming sections. Its position is on a plateau of few miles west of the slope which descends 800 feet to the Peace River. At one time the majestic Peace coursed over practically this whole district, depositing through the ages the soil constituents which have rendered possible a fertility of an enduring nature and unsurpassed anywhere in the world for the production of high grade grain.

Catering to the needs of a far-flung and ever widening agricultural district are business houses of practically all kinds. Five elevators handle the grain shipments of the surrounding farms. Two oil companies have wholesale supply depots here, while practically all lines of farm machinery, tractors, and similar equipment are carried by the different dealers. It is important to note here that farm machinery prices in the Peace River country compare very closely with similar prices in all parts of the Canadian West. Shipments are made by through freight from the east, thus landing this machinery at Peace River points at a freight cost varying only a few cents from that paid in Saskatoon, Calgary and Edmonton. Other businesses include modern general stores, hotels, drugs and stationery, lumber yards, banks, etc.

The spiritual needs of the community are provided for by the church organizations, viz., the United Church, the Anglican and Roman Catholic. Lutheran services are also conducted at points throughout the district. A community hall, erected by the United Farmers organization, provides a center for social activities, and a number of social organizations for both farmers and their wives make this their meeting place.

BATTLE RIVER PRAIRIE AND CLEAR HILLS

Lying well to the north of Peace Municipal district, is one of the most fertile virgin territories of the entire Peace River country. This is the Battle River Prairie country, noted for its luxuriant grasses and wide extent of prairie range, watered by numerous streams. The settlement of this district has been retarded owing to the lack of roads, the old trail having covered some 90 to 100 miles to reach the district. Recently the government has spent large sums in opening up a new and direct road from Grimshaw to the Battle River Prairie, with the result that hundreds of new settlers are rushing in to take up land, despite the 40 to 60 miles distance. Many of them are also going into the Clear Hills district, a shorter distance from the railway, but with more brush to be cleared. In both these districts homestead lands are available.

CLIMATE.

Extremes of temperature, sudden changes and severe storms are very rare. The winters, while not to be classed as mild, are very dry, with clear skies, little snowfall and few winds. Blizzards are unknown. The mild Chinook winds occasionally sweep through the mountain passes from the warm Pacific, bringing pleasant respites of balmy days in contrast with the colder weather of the average winter months. Spring comes early and quickly, the snow soon disappears and the ground is dry in a few days. Ice on the lakes and rivers breaks up during the latter part of April or early in May. Seeding usually begins during April, and continues sometimes towards the end of June, wheat being first sown, and later other grains, late oats for green feed being in plenty of time if sowed before the last of June. Most of the rainfall occurs in June and July, and rainy days in April and May are very rare.

The summers are remarkable for their long days and short nights. For three months there is a very little night, not to exceed three hours of darkness, while for a few weeks in the midsummer a semi-darkness for an hour and a half marks the midnight period. Summer frosts and high winds are very rare, and hail storms are practically unknown in the country. These are the growing days when vegetation makes its remarkable progress that has resulted in the enviable reputation of the Peace River country for heavy yields.

Harvest commences from about the first to the middle of August. September is an especially pleasant month, but the nights grow colder with occasional light

frosts, and winter can usually be expected early in November though mild weather until after Christmas is not uncommon. The rigours of the climate need not be feared, but houses should be substantially built to withstand the cold spells and provision made for personal comforts during these periods.

SOIL.

The soil of the greater part of the district is especially suitable to the growing of grains, grasses and vegetables. The valleys of the upper sections are rich in river silts and black and sandy clay loams. Black loam, clay loam and sandy loam are the prevailing soils in the entire district. The district is particularly free from alkali, and like the whole of the Peace River country, is free from rust. The government rust research laboratory has declared after extensive research that the development of rust in the Peace River country is practically an impossibility, and wholly improbable.

Professor Wyatt, specialist in soil chemistry for the University of Alberta, who made a series of tests of soil in the Peace River country in the fall of 1927, stated, "This is the richest and most fertile soil I have ever examined in any part of the three prairie provinces. It is a soil which will grow big crops year after year and will not 'wear out' easily like so many other soils we find, which often produce good crops for a few years and then show a diminished fertility."

FARMING 39 YEARS WITHOUT A CROP FAILURE.

For several years the dominion government has operated an experimental station at Fort Vermilion, about 200 miles north of the Grimshaw district. Mr. Robert Jones, superintendent of this experimental farm, who also operates a farm of his own, writes under date of August 25, 1926:

"In the year 1889 I came to Fort Vermilion as farm instructor to the Anglican Church mission and continued in that capacity for thirteen years. I then settled on vacant land a few miles upstream and have farmed there continuously since that date. My claim to being a genuine pioneer of the lower Peace River district, therefore, is based on thirty-seven years farming experience therein.

"In this time no crop failure has ever been known hereabouts. On the contrary the district has proved particularly favorable for grain growing and cattle raising. On both mission and home farms an unbroken series of successful years has been enjoyed, and since undertaking experimental work for the Government as an additional branch of farm work, I have made amazing and remarkable results in production of a wide range of cereals, forage plants, fruits and vegetables.

"Speaking from personal experience and knowledge I can most heartily recommend this great Peace River country to real men and women who are land and home hungry. I am an out-and-out farmer, first and last, and would not exchange my location here on the Peace for any other in Western Canada."



Twelve years ago two brothers, Albert and Arthur Hitz, decided that working a rented farm in Ontario was not proving profitable. They had but little equipment, but this they sold, and came to the Peace River country. Making the larger part of the trip from Edmonton on foot, they walked over the entire country for hundreds of miles, finally selecting a land near the present village of Berwyn. Having found a suitable location, they walked another hundred miles to the Dominion land agency, then located at Grouard (but since moved to Peace River) and filed their claim. With money which had been intended for the purchase of horses, they purchased "script", which entitled them to an additional half section in addition to their homesteads, giving them a total of 640 acres. They returned and built their first cabin, shown above, and started farming. Gradually their land was broken up, horses soon replaced the oxen with which they started, and within a few years they were on their way to prosperity. During the summer of 1925 they commenced the erection of their new home, shown below, which is the last word in modern home construction. It has full basement, hardwood floors, two bathrooms, is steam heated, and has both hot and cold running water and its



own electric lighting plant, and has garage built into one corner of the basement. More important the whole thing is paid for, the brothers selling off sufficient grain, cattle and hogs, from time to time to meet the expenditures as the building progressed.

While this remarkable success of two brothers who started with nothing twelve years ago is an exceptional instance, even in the Peace River country, we challenge any one to find another district where a similar success could be accomplished, remembering that the only source of revenue these brothers had was that derived from the farm itself.

HOMESTEAD REGULATIONS.

Prospective settlers desiring to take up homesteads would do well to apply to the Agent of Dominion Lands, Peace River, for full information on homestead duties, etc. Briefly, every person who is the sole head of a family, and every male eighteen years of age and over, is entitled, on payment of a fee of \$10 to enter upon a homestead of one-quarter section of 160 acres. A widow having minor children to support may also secure a homestead.

Breaking Land.—Cost of first breaking of land runs from \$5.00 to \$7.00 per acre when the work is hired done. Cost of clearing bush land varies so greatly, that an estimate can hardly be given. Much of the land available for homesteading has such light brush that the clearing problem is of small consequence. On the other hand, a settler might select land that required considerable clearing, although controlled fires will accomplish this at comparatively small cost.

In the earlier days of settlement in Western Canada the rule was for the settler to ship his complete farm equipment to the district in which he desired to settle. While lack of sufficient supply depots in a new country was largely responsible for this, present day conditions are different, and it has now become more economical for the settler to pay freight on as little as possible, limiting his equipment to personal and household effects up to a certain limit.

Farm machinery of all makes, can be had from dealers in almost every village throughout the district.

Farm labor is obtainable at wages ranging from \$15 a month with board for year round help, with higher wages for shorter period help, and summer wages ranging from \$30 to \$50 per month, with \$3.00 to \$4.50 per day and board being paid for harvest help.

Raising Championship Shorthorns

Four miles west of Grimshaw on the Provincial Highway is the noted herd of Scotch Shorthorns owned by John Lamont. Starting in a small way with six cows purchased from H. A. Craig, the Deputy Minister of Agriculture, the herd now numbers about forty head. From the first Mr. Lamont has made quality rather than quantity the rule in his breeding operations. His first herd sire was the Grand Champion of the Edmonton show, and since then he has followed up with two sires from the Prince of Wales Ranch, and at the present time is using a bull imported from Scotland, Bridgebank Amor-



Bridgebank Amorist (Imp.). The senior sire in the herd of John Lamont.

ist, who is considered to be the most outstanding sire in Western Canada. During the short time Mr. Lamont has been engaged in the business he has exhibited three times, and on each occasion has captured the championship, with placing on every animal shown. The herd has been periodically inspected by the officers of the Federal Veterinary Branch, and at every inspection

has been given a clean bill of health. With the exception of the herd bulls and very young calves, the entire herd is out-of-doors throughout the winter months during the hours of daylight, and only the animals being fitted for show and sale are fed a grain ration. The healthy rugged condition of the herd up to their eyes in the native pasture, speaks volumes for the nutritious character of the Peace River grasses. Mr. Lamont attributes the major share of his success at the leading shows to the fact that owing to his system of feeding and the care of the Dams in the pre-natal period, the young calves are constitutionally able to stand the strain of fitting. Animals have been taken right out of the native pasture, put on a ninety day preparation period, and have beaten animals that have been coddled and nursed for a period of twelve months.

Cuchullin Prince, born, raised and fitted near Grimshaw. Grand champion of his breed, Calgary, 1927.



FROM PORTLAND CANAL TO PEACE.

From Portland Canal to the Peace River a comparatively low elevation is maintained, across which the warm Pacific air currents flow, causing the "Chinook" winds that temper the winters in northern and central Alberta. This low-lying area forms a natural railway road from East to West and is rich in various resources.

Every East-West railway across the United States and Canada passes through long stretches of mountain territory, the mountains themselves being largely of non-mineral character, and the high altitude of the terrain rendering the surface unsuitable for productive purposes. Such conditions do not prevail except to a small extent in the area between Portland Canal and the Peace. The mountains of the Coast range are known to be heavily mineralized and the valley of the Naas river, which furnishes a natural grade to the Groundhog coalfields section, is rich in timber and agricultural possibilities. This area when settled will provide a railway with an unfailing tonnage, both in farm and timber products.

The Groundhog coalfields are estimated to contain many millions of tons of high-grade anthracite coal which will guarantee steady railway traffic; further east the possibilities for mineral production are known to be vast, though there has been no intensive prospecting except in a few scattered areas. The Ferguson silver-lead mine, now under development, has an ore deposit so large that it in itself warrants the construction of a railway to the coast.

In all the territory embraced within the great tableland drained by these mighty rivers, the valleys are broad and level, and carpeted with bunch-grass, the best native fodder for stock known in the world. Thousands of cattle and horses will some day revel in this luxuriance, fattening on the gift that nature has provided. Indians and trappers report that through this country the snowfall is light and that stock should be able to winter outside.

Before reaching the immense plains of the Peace River farming area a railway will pass through minor mountain ranges, an area rich in coal, iron and the base of precious metals, while in the open spaces opportunities for mixed farming are unexcelled and only await the advent of transportation facilities to become filled with a prosperous and contented population.

In all the distance between Portland Canal and the Peace are rushing streams with a potentiality for the development of hydraulic power sufficient to supply all the requirements of the future. Not many years will elapse before the development of the natural products must result in the establishment of great manufacturing centres, the variety of whose output will be limited only by the diversity of gifts contained in the cornucopia of the earth's bounty.

The country to be crossed by railway from Portland Canal to the Peace is capable of becoming a self-contained empire, and of supporting a population equal to that of many European countries. Sir Donald Mann realized this when, nearly two decades ago, he conceived the practical dream of opening up this country.

The time has now come for Sir Donald's dream to become a reality.

(Stewart, B.C. Board of Trade Booklet.)

For further information regarding the

Peace River Country

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